

## **Post-Event Summary Report**

**Name of Event:** Community Forum Event “Elder Issues and Challenges- Now and Future”

**Date of Event:** May 18, 2005

**Location of Event:** University Area Community Complex Center, Tampa FL  
(Include city and state)

**Number of Persons attending:** 35

**Sponsoring Organization(s):** Tampa Office on Aging & Elder Care Advocacy of Florida with The University Area Community Development Corp., Inc.

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Please follow this format for each priority area, with the most important listed first.

**Please ensure that your organization’s name and contact information is provided at the bottom of each page submitted.**

**Priority Issue #1:** Access to Supportive Services

### **Barriers:**

- Transportation system inadequate to meet needs now and in the future.
- Relative caregivers/grandparents taking care of grandchildren not given same benefits as foster parents.
- Lack of adequate funding for respite care; i.e. weekends, evenings, 24 hr. care.
- Many seniors on fixed incomes are ineligible for state funded services; i.e. Community Care for the Elderly and the Medicaid Waiver programs. Unable to afford fee-for-service.
- Wait list for Section 8 Housing
- Taxes increasing for elders on fixed incomes who own homes, forcing elders to consider other housing options.
- Inadequate funding for legal service providers.
- Senior centers inadequate to address the needs of the baby boom generation (i.e. design and activities).

**Solutions:**

- Develop a coordinated transportation system in Hillsborough County.
- Consider neighborhood routes connecting w/ major routes. Use smaller buses.
- Develop legislation that will give grandparents the same benefits as foster families.
- Advocate for additional funding for caregiver respite programs under the federal Older Americans Act and/or other potential resources.
- Develop cost-sharing approach (underwritten by state) to serve those elders on fixed incomes who can pay for a portion of their care.
- Expand tax credits for developers who are committed to construction of affordable, accessible housing (include basic services on site; i.e. cafeteria, small grocery store, barber shop, bank, etc.)
- Look @ building codes to expand housing options.
- Provide additional funding through the Older Americans Act and/or other potential resources for legal services. Continue to require that attorney's in private practice provide pro bono service
- Identify best practice models to address the development of new concepts for Sr. Centers.

**Priority Issue #2: Housing**

There is a lack of Affordable Housing in the Tampa Bay Region

**Barriers:**

- There is currently a 24 month wait for Section 8 Housing in Hillsborough County.
- In certain areas there has been a 45% increase in the market for residential units.
- Developers would rather build \$250,000 Condominiums for more profit.
- Application paperwork and forms are too difficult for many applicants.
- A large number of the Hispanic population requires assistance in all areas.
- Many elders rely on \$300 to \$400 SSI to live and are priced out of the market
- Economically distressed areas are not acceptable living areas for elders.
- Lack of financial assistance in living accommodations for elders.
- 300,000 new residents are expected in 5-7 years.

**Solutions:**

- Have governmental agencies work together to eliminate waiting periods for housing.

- Have a central location, in all areas that offer assistance in completing forms.
- Provide incentives to developers to enter the Affordable Housing Market.
- Increase subsidies/grants to elders requiring assistance in securing housing.
- Implement Regional Planning by Agencies to prepare for influx.
- Standardize forms and paperwork for eligibility.

### **Priority Issue #3: Transportation**

#### **Barriers:**

- Today's transportation needs are not being met, making it difficult to envision a future where needs might be met;
- Seniors, providers don't know about services that are available;
- Seniors need to be able to get to locations where public transportation will pick them up;
- Climate issues affect senior's ability to walk or wait for public transportation;
- Transportation is the least funded of the elderly services;
- Sprawl affects the county's ability to provide services to all; rural seniors are even less likely to have access to transportation.
- Transplanted seniors recall what other states offer, despite awareness of differing tax bases and lack of income tax in FL;
- There is a lack of transportation for the mobility-challenged.

#### **Solutions:**

- Create a consolidated transportation authority for the Tampa Bay region, and for Hillsborough County;
- Set up specific non-rush hour services for seniors; use school buses perhaps to meet this need;
- Agreement among providers for specialized forms of transportation; by area, by type (for example, one provider will handle transport to doctors offices, labs, etc.);
- Development planning should always include transportation component;
- Ease liability restrictions so that communities can develop more volunteer-based transportation, like Sun City Center has;
- Align disability advocates and services with transportation providers;
- Enlist large retailers to develop a private system of transporting older customers on specific days, and times;
- Incorporate transportation planning into other services planned for seniors;
- Expand bilingual service availability

#### **Priority Issue #4: Healthcare needs: now and future**

##### **Barriers:**

- There is a need for more Geriatricians.
  - Individuals trained to specifically meet (and understand) the medical needs of older adults.
    - Reported that the average PCP doesn't understand the needs of the aging body.
- Stated that 55-65 y/o are falling through the cracks. They cannot afford medical insurance.
  - This was reported as a serious issue
- Decline in the quality of care
- More money is needed for preventive programs (e.g., providing medications, etc.)
  - More funds needed for the fall
  - More funds needed for all-inclusive services for the elderly
    - e.g., social, emotional, physical
- More money is needed to provide caregivers with the services needed to help themselves (and indirectly help the aging patient)
  - More funds needed for caregivers who are providing for the aging adult with dementia
    - There is a lack of resources to provide training
- More research money is needed to facilitate the understanding and finding cures for specific chronic diseases (e.g., Alzheimer's disease, arthritis) that affect the aging population.
- There is a long waiting list for services
- Long hours in the waiting room to see your PCP
- Foreign speaking PCPs
  - They are sometimes difficult to understand when procedures are being explained
- Overmedication of elderly patients
  - Prescribing the wrong medications to patients

##### **Solutions:**

Several solutions were suggested by members of the group. These solutions were not mentioned for a specific issue(s), but rather as global solutions that can address multiple issues and concerns. Some of the suggested solutions include:

- Some elderly patients (who do not have caregivers, etc.) need an advocate.
  - This advocate would be someone that the individual takes with them to appointments, helps them interpret what the PCP and/or nurse is telling them about their condition, etc.
  - This advocate would also assist them with other issues

- Housing, transportation to and from appointments, etc.
- Lower price of medications
  - There was an issue with price the of prescription medications being lower in countries such as France, Canada, and England, yet are more expensive in the US.
  - Lower the cost of OTC medications
- Provide education to the patient, caregivers, and the community as to what type of services are available to them (e.g., reference to specialists, information/support groups, etc.)
- Pay staff persons (e.g., Nurse's Assistants) more money to care to elderly patients
- Encourage more physicians to specialize in Geriatric medicine
- Develop programs that empower individuals to ask the appropriate questions to physicians and nurses (not being intimidated)
- Develop a comprehensive system/site(s) (a "one stop shop") that allows patients to see their PCP, get their medications, see a counselor (if necessary) at the same facility.
  - This addresses the lack of transportation issue